

# CHAPTER 10

## Masjid Zahir: A Heritage Masjid as a Traditional Landmark in a City

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### 10.1 THE HERITAGE MASJID

In Islam, the Masjid is a sacred place on earth intended as a space where all worshippers turn to God. Besides being used for ritual prayers, a masjid is a place for learning, both secular and religious studies, and a place for honoring important historical occasions as well as a platform for announcements to society and national events.

In the early days of Islam, the design of a masjid was very simple: it was a basic rectangular building with an orientation towards the Kaaba. During the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, there was a rising number of masjids and courts were surrounded by shaded areas.

As Abdin (2010) highlights, elements in a masjid, niches such as the mihrab and mimbar, the seat for the orator (imam), and a minaret (maazana) were also developed during this time.

The minarets were developed from elements of language from other provinces, for example, the spiral minaret tower in Samarra in Iraq was modelled after the Ibn Tulun masjid in Egypt.

A masjid usually has one or more minarets, or towers, from which the muezzin calls Muslims to prayer five times a day. Minarets are typically the distinguishing elements of masjid architecture, and they mitigate the enormity of the roof forms including domed structures.

### 10.1.1 Masjid as an Icon

The word 'icon' refers primarily to "an important and enduring symbol" (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2009). Guy and Mokena (2011) describe an 'icon' as 'having a visual impact' and that this will always be defining a characteristic of an icon. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2009), literally 'iconic' means "of relating to, or having the character of an icon." The Oxford Dictionary, citing from Newsweek in 1976, identifies an 'icon' as "...a person or thing regarded as representative of a culture or movement; important or influential in a particular (cultural) context."

An 'iconic' building has been however defined as a "hegemonic project of a transnational capitalist class" (Leslie, 2010). Leslie (2010) further argues that in the global era, iconic architecture strives to turn more or less all public spaces into consumerist spaces, not only with respect to shopping malls but also generally. This includes all cultural spaces such as museums and sport complexes. According to Andree (2008), the term iconic architecture has fallen into disrepute and hence, one should reclaim the original meaning of iconic architecture. He claimed that at one time, the term iconic was a compliment, a way of recognizing architecture that is beautiful in form, and serving a useful purpose, as well as creating a sense of place by contributing to the public realm.

According to Anthony (2006), identity is frequently related to geographical location and a specific sense of place. Such a place may be characterized by a distinctive climate, and by other geographical, cultural, linguistic, architectural, and social characteristics. Masjid Zahir can be described as such a legacy from the past, something that lives on today and which can be passed on to future generations. As Kate (2006) asserts that, what makes something part of our heritage is not whether it is an iconic building or a landscape, but the value that one places on it. Value, therefore, remains central to all heritage practices; it justifies legal protection, and it is what inspires people to get involved with heritage.

The value may be aesthetic, social, scientific or historical; or for its underlying narrative associated with events or people (Kate, 2006).

The symbolic relationship between identity and the public realm is supported by a commitment to treat people as being equal; the people's success as a nation has it to be based on a willingness to embrace new societies, new cultures, new ideas and new influences.

Kate (2006) regards the historic environment as being a vital part of the public realm. Hence Masjid Zahir has a certain significance of monuments or buildings that people instinctively recognize and value them as not just part of a townscape, but also part of their own personal identities.



Figure 10.1: The original form of Masjid Zahir in 1914.  
Source: Khadijah Moore, 2007

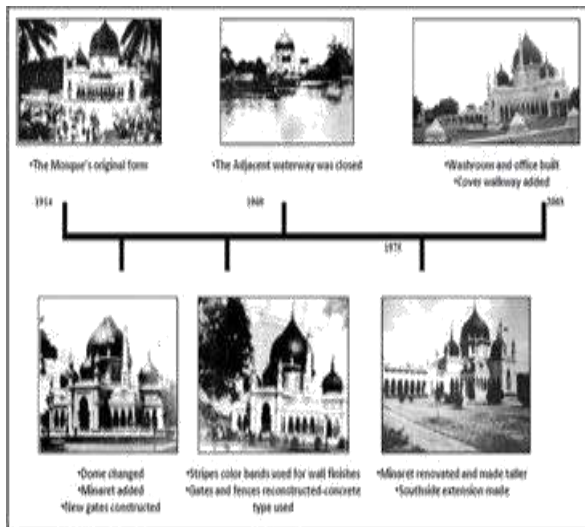


Figure 10.2 Building morphology photo diagram depicting transformation from 1914 to 2007 Source: IUM, 2007

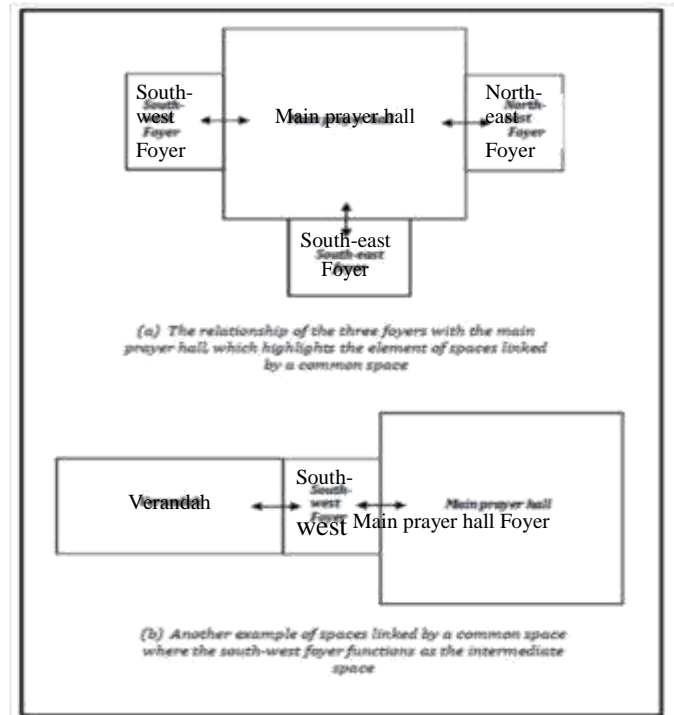


Figure 10.3 : The relationship of space and design principles within the symmetry of the Masjid Zahir layout  
Source: IUM, 2007

In Malaysia, what is known as 'historical buildings' or 'heritage buildings' are national heritage buildings and these include monuments, or structures. Like Masjid Zahir, they play a role in significantly, reflecting the nation's cultures, history, civilization and development. As mentioned by Paiman (2003), such heritage sites and buildings are conserved as "a reflection of national integrity". Writers of Malaysian history face many challenges due to lack of written historical records and other historical evidence. Yet heritage brings about a sense of nostalgia and serves as a source of pride to any community. National heritage artifacts as Masjid Zahir, serve as a generation's link with the past and play a role in bringing a sense of national pride and belonging amongst the future generations.

### **10.1.2 Masjid Zahir: A Heritage Morphology**

Masjid Zahir is located strategically in the heart of Alor Star, Kedah. It lies within the historical complex of Medan Bandar, Kedah, residing between Jalan Kampung Perak and Jalan Pekan Melayu. Within this complex, Masjid Zahir shares its historical significance with two other heritage buildings, the Istana Pelamin and Balai Besar. These buildings were planned and strategically to have a strong administrative relationship with one another and with the whole of Kedah (Dato' Haji Ismail, 2007). Aside from these buildings, Masjid Zahir is

located within the same vicinity as the Clock Tower the Alor Star Tower, and the Royal Museum. Together, all these buildings make up the historical context and quarter of Alor Star.

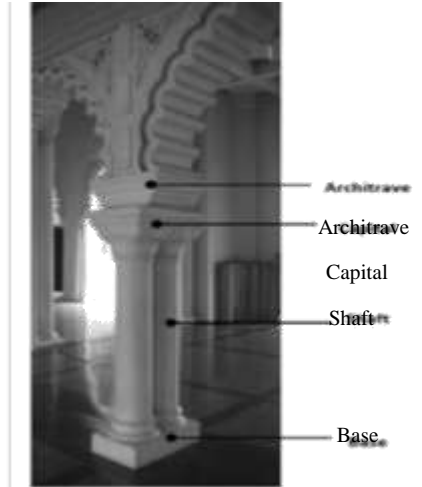
This 100 year old masjid has been a part of Alor Star's history; since time immemorial. It has undergone renovations and been adapted many times to changing functions and times (Zarina, 1993). During its early days, just like any masjid, it was strategically built by the river for the easement of trade as well as to provide a place of worship for merchants. Because trade existed by the riverside, many Chinese shop- lots were constructed surrounding the masjid. Hence, the masjid had served the local sellers and daily buyers well. When there were no more trade routes going through the river, its function could still be discerned by the existence of a jetty right next to the masjid. At later stage, Tg. Chali, next to Pekan China located on the west side of the masjid where the original Pekan Rabu site was located, became an important a jetty along Sg. Kedah.

The rich and the poor are not discriminated in the use of this masjid, neither are the non-Muslims discouraged from visiting. Other than for praying, other religious based activities such as Quranic recitations and Hajj courses were held here at the masjid to cater the needs of the Muslim society in Alor Star. Its significance to Alor Star is immense.

It is an epitome the people of Kedah as it unfolds Kedah's history to the public and to various visitors throughout the year.



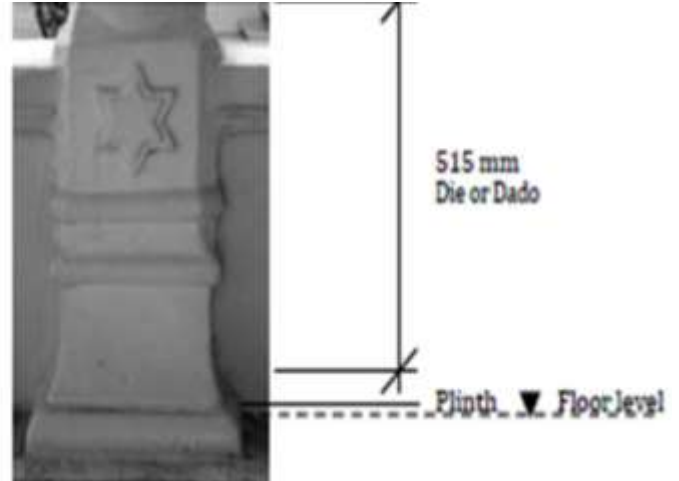
**Figure 10.4 : Left: Main prayer hall, Centre: Corridor,  
Right: Ablution Area  
Source: IIUM, 2007**



**Figure 10.5 : Components of the column  
Source: IIUM, 2007**



**Figure 10.6 : Left: Elevation corridor, Right: View of the  
colonnade in the  
Source: IIUM, 2007**



**Figure 10.7 : Component of the pedestal  
Source: IIUM, 2007**

### 10.1.3 Influences on Masjid Zahir

Though at times this is disputed, it is believed that the original design of Masjid Zahir was by James Gorman and a Malaysian draftsman named Pak Din (Zarina, 1993). It was learnt from an interview with Dato' Hj. Ismail (a Kedah Historian) that Ahmad Lebai Tambi, who was a qualified Malay draftsman, was also involved in the design team. Together, they were able to deliver the construction of a Moorish and Moghul style masjid. In the original design, the masjid's designers included considerations on natural ventilation by having the main doors and lower ground openings opened towards the river, as the prevailing wind comes from the direction of the river, as seen in the location of the open veranda.

The original masjid, with a symmetrical planning layout, was expanded when the new prayer area with a new mihrab (identical to the previous mihrab) was built in 1959. This enabled the building to accommodate 2200 people compared to the previous capacity of 600 people. This symmetrical feature originated from Moghul architectural origins (Chen, 1996). A symmetrical planning layout is a common feature used in Islamic architecture and in accordance with its principles of scale and proportion.

This was followed by a series of renovations and extensions (3 to 4 times extension work was done) from 1960 to 1975, which were carried out after the reign of Sultan

Abdul Hamid Halim Shah. The main prayer hall's dome was renovated into a bulbous form with additional ornaments in the form of khat carving and chatris installations. A minaret was also added in the 1950s to allow the muezzin (the person in charge for the call of prayer) to recite the adhan that marks the start of prayer time.

According to Abdul Razak Bakar (n.d), it was in 1975, certain parts of Masjid Zahir were changed and renovated. These changes included the extension of a veranda within the southern wing of the masjid and renovations within the eastern minaret. The minaret was revamped so many times that it became taller than the turrets and different in terms of design compared to the rest of the building. These domes, which were constructed using bricks or masonry construction system, were later clad with copper that oxidized naturally and blackened through time.

## 10.2 SPACE AND ORGANISATION

The Mihrab is one of the chief components in a masjid as symbolizes a focal point. Every masjid has its mihrab's position being focused towards the Ka'bah. The direction towards the Ka'bah reflects the principle of Islam, [that of Unity](#). Originally, the Masjid Zahir was designed with the main prayer hall and the three foyers located in the southwest, southeast and northeast areas, which included the royal dining room. All



**Figure 10.8: Aerial view of the flat roof of the veranda towards the main prayer hall**  
Source: IIUM, 2007



**Figure 10.9 : Concrete ceiling with plaster finishes at the veranda area**  
Source: IIUM, 2007



**Figure 10.10: View of "identical triple columns" at the foyer**  
Source: IIUM, 2007

of the spaces were organized in centrality, with the mihrab located in the main prayer hall as its focal point.

Apart from the mihrab, a mimbar (pulpit) is positioned on the right side of the mihrab to function as a place for the imam to deliver the khutbah (sermon) during Friday prayers. The verandah area is a multifunctional open area, which is used for resting and religious activities, such as for Quranic recitation classes as well as for the teaching of religious knowledge. The female prayer hall is located at the southeast of the main prayer hall.

The royal dining room, also known as *Bilik Santapan* Diraja for the Sultan, is located on the northeast of the main prayer hall. It was originally constructed in 1912 along with the main prayer hall and three other foyers. The gate on the east side of the masjid leading to the royal dining room was only for the use of the royal families during the era of Sultan Abdul Hamid.

In principle, the layout is characterized by internal spaces are linked by a common space. The layout can be defined is generally as two spaces separated by a distance, which can be linked or related to each other by a third, intermediate space. The overall aim is to express its function, the intermediate space differs in form and orientation from the other two spaces.

## 10.2.2 Construction and Detail

The masjid's structural elements basically consist of eight elements: the foundation, the floor structure, columns, arches, walls, ceilings, roof and beams, and domes. Different floor tiles were used and these reflect part of the original and extension areas of the masjid. Gray tiles (200 mm x 200 mm dimension) were used as the main finishes in the main prayer hall. Green tiles with the same dimension were also used along the corridor of the extended prayer hall on the northwest side. The veranda at the southwest side uses a black tile pattern as part of the floor finishes. The ablution area is finished with 300 mm x 300 mm orange coloured ceramic tiles as part of the floor finishes.

There are about 261 concrete columns but not all columns function as structural elements; some merely serve as decorative elements. There are four types of column used in Masjid Zahir: the single column, the twin columns, the identical triple columns and the identical quart columns.

Pedestals in the main prayer hall and in the verandah support the arches at the octagonal space and the roof structure at the veranda. They create openings for the main prayer hall, where columns have motifs of the acanthus flower. The columns define the edges between the interior and exterior spaces, and they permit visual and spatial continuity to exist between the space and its surrounding. The presence of columns instead of walls create an airy and open space that evokes a sense of relaxation and serenity.



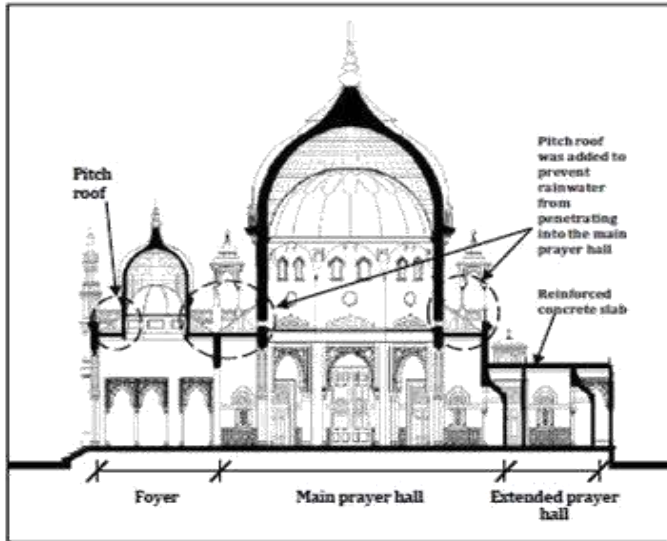


Figure 10.11 : Detail section  
Source: IIUM, 2007



Figure 10.12: The crescent moon facing the Qibla  
Source: IIUM, 2007



Figure 10.13: Interior view of the central dome  
Source: IIUM, 2007



Figure 10.14: White marble finishes at the main stair-  
case of the foyer  
Source: IIUM, 2007

Identical triple columns are located at the edge where the main foyer meets the corridor, in front of the main door. The types of arches used are of Moorish origins, including the multifold and the horseshoe-shaped types, which are among the foiled arch styles. Within a semicircular arch, there are a series of small arches cut in the intrados (Curl, 1999).

The main prayer hall is enclosed by four-sided brick masonry walls, but as mentioned earlier, the veranda is an open space area. The walls are made of bricks with plaster finish on both sides. The external wall of the masjid is painted with pale yellow, symbolizing royalty. Aluminium clad ceiling panels are used for ceiling in the foyers and along the corridor area. Brown cladding is used to create a timber effect. Concrete with plaster finishes and white paint are used for the ceiling finishes at the veranda area. The structural grid pattern of waffle slab utilizes part of the ceiling design and they are decorated with gray floral motifs.

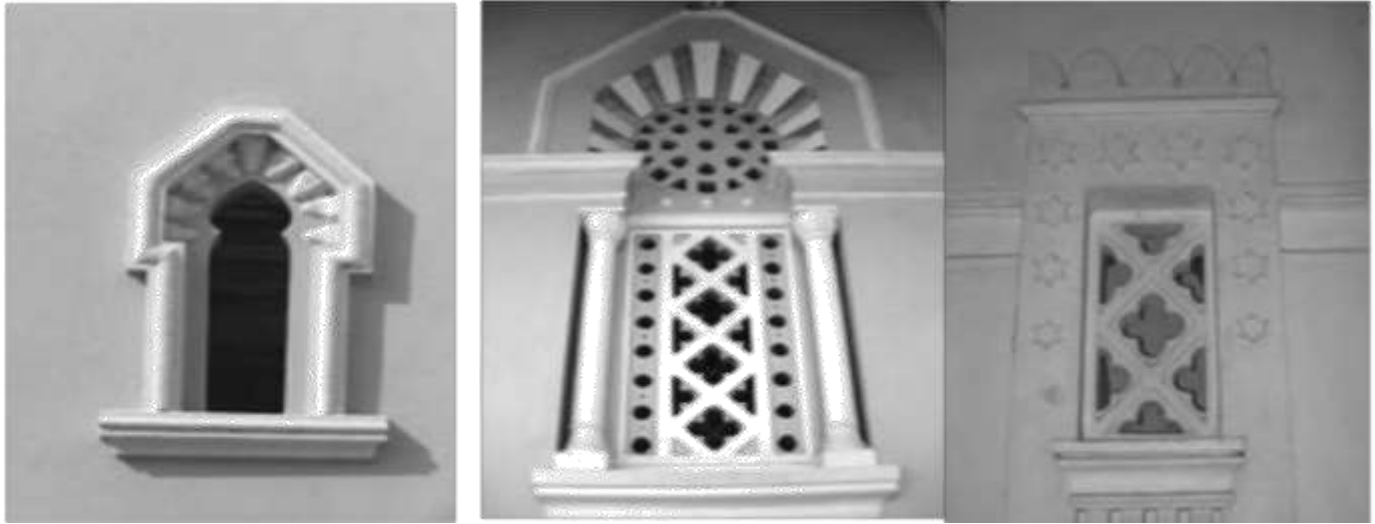
The flat roof structure made of reinforced concrete slab is used as the enclosure for the main prayer hall and the veranda area. The two-way waffle slab was used for the verandah's roof plane. Waffle slabs are able to carry heavier loads and span longer distances because they are reinforced by ribs in two directions. There is also a parapet wall along the edge of the flat roof made of reinforced concrete. Repetitive triangle shapes are used as the design of the parapet wall, typically known as the crenellated parapet. There are pitch roofs constructed around the domes as to

prevent rainwater from penetrating into the interior spaces and into the royal dining room and red coloured clay tiles are used as the roof finishes.

During renovations in 1959, Masjid Zahir replaced its dome to a bulbous dome, which portrays the Moghul style of architecture. The main dome, which is located in the middle of the praying hall, is surrounded by smaller domes. It is constructed on an octagonal drum. There is a moon crescent shape decoration at the top of each dome, positioned facing straight into the direction of the Qibla. The main dome admits natural light that penetrates through the fixed stained glass windows, located beneath the dome and near the drum. The internal part of the dome is decorated with geometrical patterns painted in blue and in the middle, is the word 'Allah'.

Different floor structures are used to differentiate spaces and functions, and to achieve certain intended ambience. Strip-patterned carpet with double green lines is used at the large main prayer hall, making it easier to form rows of the prayer 'saf'. Four sided brick masonry walls encloses the main prayer hall. The walls provide both privacy and protection from the climatic elements for the interior spaces of the main prayer hall, while the colonnaded façade forms a semi-transparent screen that re-establishes a connection with the exterior environment. The structural grid pattern gives a sense of direction to the space.

Zarina (1993) theorises that the dome symbolizes the 'Arsy (throne of God), and the curved forms represents



**Figure 10.15: The Islamic geometrical patterns are of the Moorish and Moghul influence, and not of the Malays.**



**Figure 10.16: Left: The chatri's design is similar to that of the mimbar's. Right: The square plan chatri is inspired by the Moghul architecture.**



**Figure 10.17: The original Moroccan design mimbar since 1915.**

the sky while the lamps characterize the twinkling of the stars. As a person enters the main praying hall, a feeling of being in the centre of the earth is subtly evoked.

There are 13 doors all together, three being the major ones, and 10 being secondary doors. Both types of doors are conventional swing doors which use copper hinges by timber jambs for the effectiveness of isolating sound as well as for weather-tightness. These wooden doors have remained the same as the original ones from the day they were built. The east and west of the main doors creates a subdivision between the female and male prayer area as the doors are opposing each other, creating a path in the middle of the prayer hall.

There are five different designs of windows, some with fixed glasses, while some are ventilating windows. The constructions of these windows are of brick masonry, with embellishments in concrete form works. The fixed stained glasses on the drum of the dome act as the clerestory windows which give sufficient lighting to the prayer hall.

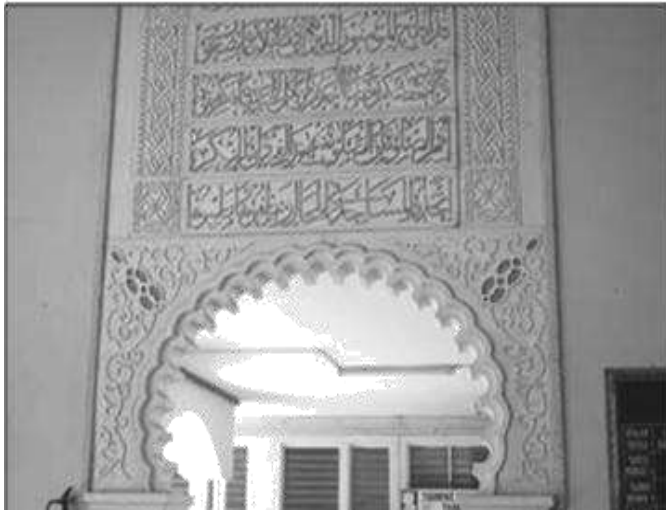
The carvings and décor of the mihrabs are fully adorned with carvings of geometrical patterns and of seashells. Arabic calligraphies and floral motifs are engraved in hard wood. The inner parts of the mihrab's arches are carvings of arabesques. The Khat on the arches of the mihrab illustrates the noble of verse 9, Surah 62 (Al-Jumuah) of the Qur'an.

Located on the right of the first mihrab, the mimbar is still in its original form and materials since the day it was

built. It is made of hard wood and was customized by a local carpenter. The mimbar is decorated with geometric carvings derived from Moroccan designs. Calligraphy carvings of the words 'Allah' and 'Muhammad (pbuh)' can be found on the mimbar. At the top of the mimbar, stand four posts and arches, which are capped by a golden dome that a reflections of the moon crescent at the pinnacle of the dome. The existence of chattris (umbrella-shaped cupola) or chavadas on the masjids roof was influenced by the vocabulary of Mughal architecture. There are four chattris surrounding the main domes, which were constructed mainly for aesthetic appeal rather than for a specific function. The chattris were positioned around the main dome in order to have a gradual hierarchy between the dome and the main body of the whole masjid .

Turrets are little towers that are usually located at corners and angles larger structures and function more as ornamental elements (Curl, 2000). In the case of Masjid Zahir, turrets are decorative elements derived from the Mughal architecture. They contribute towards the formal appearance of the masjid, giving the form a sense of balance and harmony. In Masjid Zahir, there are six turrets. One is the height of 14,894 mm and with octagonal plans of 619.7 mm in diameter, a larger scale compared to the other four turrets. Each of these turrets is capped by cupolas that resemble the ones atop the domes.

Fluted terminals and cupolas are elements of ornamentation of Islamic architecture. They project a sense



**Figure 10.18:** Calligraphy inscription combined with the beauty of the arch enhances the interior of the masjid.  
Source: IIUM, 2007



**Figure 10.19:** Left: Calligraphy of the Thuluth style stating one of the hadith of the Prophet (pbuh). Right: The use of square kufic calligraphy with the word Allah at the external façade of Masjid Zahir  
Source: IIUM, 2007



**Figure 10.20:** The interior of the mihrabs have carvings of seashells to give a symbolic significance to the place of worship.  
Source: IIUM, 2007



**Figure 10.21:** Secondary mihrab as extension to the prayer hall.  
Source: IIUM, 2007

of weightlessness by their continuous repetition and subtly help create a sense of continuous space (Imam Reza, 2007).

These devices act to “dissolve the barriers” between the load bearing structures and the ornamental (non-load bearing) structures. The fluted terminals are miniature tower-like structures with cupolas and are made out of concrete form work with carvings on them.

The use of chattris in the masjid has been related to the governing the proportioning of the elevations (Grube et al., 1995). The decorations of the chattris are the same repeated decorations found throughout the whole masjid: geometric designs, six-sided stars, and domes with a crescent moon at the pinnacle.

In summary, the vertical expression brought by the expressional and ornamental elements in Masjid Zahir negates the weight and massing and balances one perception. The actual massing of the whole structure is balanced almost giving it a sense of weightlessness. It promotes that gradual change of hierarchy in terms of elevation, especially with the main dome and the body. In a demonstrable harmony characteristic of Islamic architecture, the fluted terminals bring forth a sense of the spiritual as it draws the eye towards the cupolas atop the smaller domes. The repetitions of these cupolas bring visual rhythm and harmony to the massing. The cupolas give the sense of elegance to the bulkiness of the domes and chattris.

## 10.3 ISLAMIC ART AND ORNAMENT

Decorations in Islamic architecture serve not only to beautify the space, but serve to create the effect of weights and unlimited spaces within its interiors (Mitchell, 2000). Masjid Zahir uses four types of decorative elements in beautifying the overall space, calligraphy, geometrical pattern, arabesque and stained glass.

The role of calligraphy is related to its link between the language Quranic with the religion of Islam, which assists and reminds of the One true God. The types of Arabic calligraphy used in Masjid Zahir are the *Thuluth* and the *Kufic*, which were fully developed in the ninth century AD. The *Thuluth* inscriptions are used in the interior of Masjid Zahir while the square *Kufic* are applied to the exterior of the masjid.

Geometrical patterns are typically used as part of the decorative elements to express the ideological and the philosophical ideas of Islam. Calligraphy in the Islamic world is considered the most important art because it reflects the words of God; either taken as a full verse or a single word such as the names of Allah and Muhammad (Jones, 2000). Either way, it serves the same purpose: to glorify Allah as the Great Sustainer and Creator of creatures and the universe. Furthermore, this form of art is a symbol of honor for the masjid as a sacred place of worship. The calligraphy of Masjid Zahir creates an extended effect. The reasons for having the



Figure 10.22: Left: Six-pointed star on the exterior façade.  
Right: Six-pointed star located on the exterior and interior Source: IIUM, 2007



Figure 10.25: The geometrical pattern on the main dome Source: IIUM, 2007

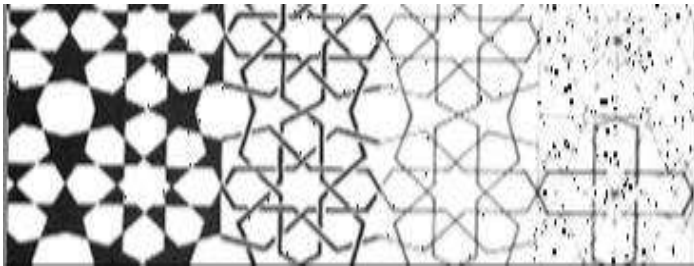


Figure 10.2: Repeated units forming a ten-pointed star Source: IIUM, 2007



Figure 10.24: Interior view of the extended prayer hall Source: IIUM, 2007

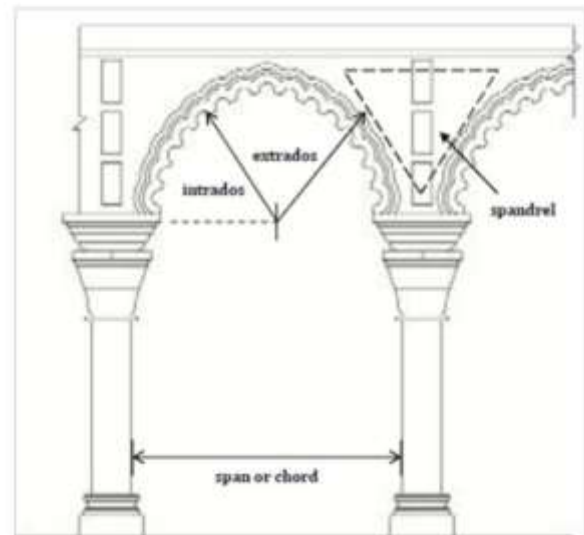


Figure 10.26: Components of multifoil arch Source: IIUM, 2007

Quranic verses extruded outwards were to protect the art from being stepped on by passersby since scientifically, any carvings carved within the walls or other elements will create shadows on the floor when cast by the ray of lights.

Based on an interview with Mr. Mohd Radzi, one of the masjid caretakers, some of the calligraphy in the interior spaces is relatively recent as this masjid had undergone some renovations recently (IIUM heritage center, Measured drawing, 2008). Changes were made over the past few years with the addition of the calligraphy writings on the interior walls and the mihrab.

One recalls how geometrical patterns existed during the days of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) one recalls when he and his sahabah, Saidina Abu Bakar, were hiding in a cave (Hira' Cave) from their rival. A spider began spinning its web, producing a star geometric form which later evolved into other geometrical shapes, forming an extensive network of geometrical, symmetrical and repetitive patterns. The miracle of the spider later became an inspiration and guide for craftsmen and artists to develop various geometrical concepts, compositions and patterns. Apart from beautifying and decorating the exterior and interior of masjids and other Islamic building, these geometrical patterns also symbolizes that the omnipresence of God is everywhere as these patterns represent "Unity and multiplicity" and vice-versa (Jones, 2000).

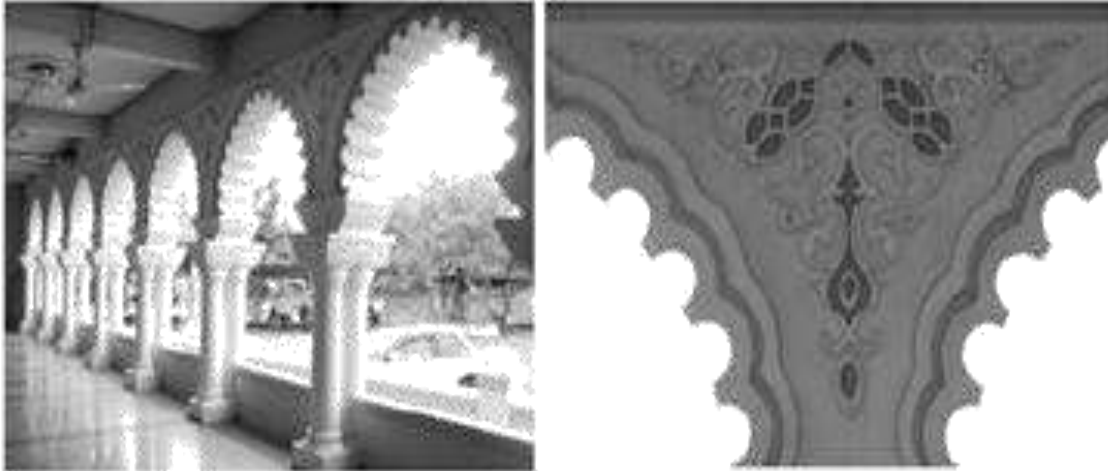
Meanwhile, typically the arabesque is characterized by a continuous stem which splits regularly, forming series of counterpoised, leafy, secondary stems which can either turn to a split again or return to be re-integrated into the main stem. The characteristics of the pattern are limitless and rhythmical in movements with repetitions of the curved lines, producing a design that is balanced and free from tension. The artist of the Islamic world often observed nature faithfully, reproducing and interpreting it with a great deal of accuracy (Jones, 2000; Zarina, 1993).

In Islamic architecture, light is a symbol of Divine Unity, thus, it is believed that Muslim artists seek to transform their crafts and decorations into a vibration of light. Light functions not only to modify other elements of decorations, but also to create patterns (Jones, 2002). In a nutshell, the use of calligraphy, geometrical patterns, arabesque and stained glass are the common elements used in the overall decoration of Masjid Zahir; they not only symbolize Islamic faith and principles, but also portray the inner beauty of Islam.

## **10.4 HISTORY**

The physical forms of Masjid Zahir were designed based on Moorish and Mughal architectures, using the same grandeur in scale, the extensive use of masonry construction, and most likely the same construction methods. These facts may all be due to the fact that these masjids were built during the same





**Figure 10.27 Left: The arcade's spandrels in the verandah were decorated and enhanced by the repetitive usage of arabesque detail  
Right: The symmetrical arabesque design on the arch's spandrel at the verandah of Masjid Zahir Source: IIUM, 2007**



**Figure 10.28: Left: The stained glass located at the foyer. Right: Close up photo of the stained glass window at the drum of the dome  
Source: IIUM, 2007**

era, an era when the British colonies were influencing one another due to their close economic relationship and were having highly influenced by the British architects who were at that time, inspired by the Islamic architecture. Thus, this grand masjid somehow managed to adopt and adapt foreign architectural language into its own synthesis, creating a breed out of the interplay and fusion of Moorish and Moghul architecture. Its existence speaks of Malaysian history, representing a narrative of Malaysia was a melting pot of different cultures due to the trading and colonization of others.

#### **10.4.1 On Public Perception**

The local inhabitants immensely value heritage as an element of their place identity in the historical city of Alor Setar, similar to the case of Balai Besar. The idea of nationhood is regarded as important by both local inhabitants and visitors. Thus, identity and nationhood have provided not only a sense of historical settlement, but also a local and global identity to the city. In the current ever changing world, the historical city of Alor Setar is facing constant transformations through new changes in its development.

However, the existing historical-urban context of Alor Setar remains critical to the local inhabitants as well as to the visitors. They prefer to maintain the local historical identity, nationhood and cultural heritage, and support

the preservation of the heritage building in recognition of the local personalities. Reflecting on these results, cultural heritage has contributed a great deal to the identities of cities, as described by Orbasli, "Cultural heritage undoubtedly has communal value and the links between cultural objects and national identity have long been understood" (Syukri, 2008).

### **10.5 HERITAGE & ICONS**

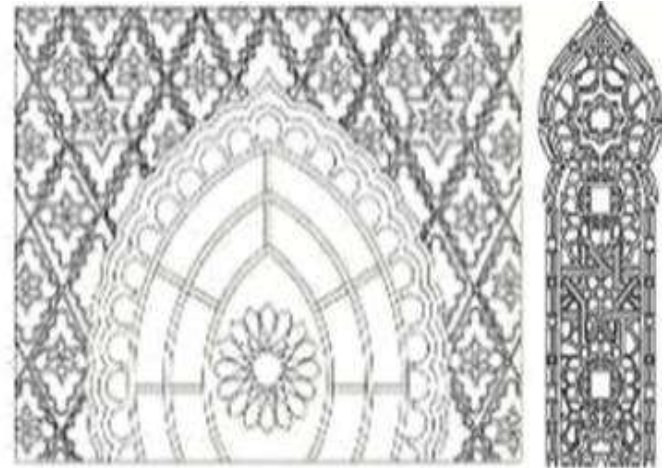
Kedah, specifically Alor Star, houses many historical buildings which represents various architectural styles that were introduced in the past. Each of the building has its own significance and history that contributes to the history of our nation. Studying the historical buildings, in terms of the history, the technological advancement, the social and culture of the community unearth the great potentials of heritage structures The masjid, aesthetically, becomes iconic of Alor Star and its identify.

Masjid Zahir fosters a sense of pride to the people of Alor Setar. Due to this, it acts as a future reference point for the upcoming generations. The masjid becomes at once, in one structure, a social service center, community center, and an Islamic education center. Due to its location and iconic stance as a traditional masjid, its houses regular, events, services and acts of charity such as sheltering the homeless and needy, as well as hosting other ceremony such as wedding, funeral and *gotong-royong* (helping one another),

and is always involved in assisting the less fortunate.

Kedah's architecture has evolved in various ways throughout the decades. The legacy of Masjid Zahir should be well preserved and conserved as a guidance for the future generations. The old and new functions can be merged and the sense of identity can be enhanced to create integration between the local inhabitants and the visitors, the cultural heritage events and activities act as an operational interface between them.

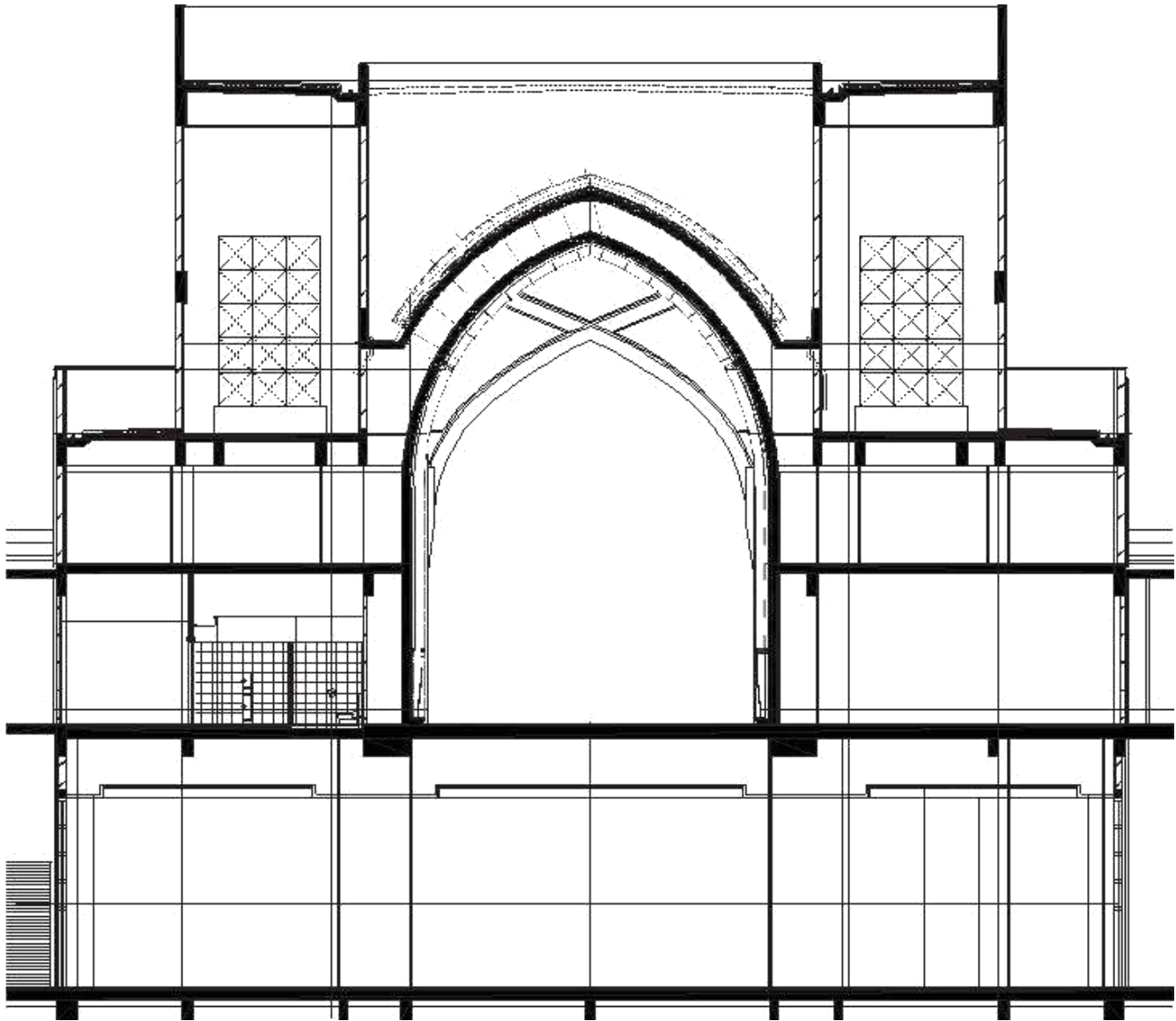
As mentioned by Newman and McLean, "the process of constructing identities is probably most apparent in national museums where a national identity is being appropriated." Heritage buildings represent the foundation, the identity of a community and the reflection of a society. Therefore, it is imperative to have concerted efforts to preserve them for the future generation as one of the pictorial evidence of the history and a place for recollection. Awareness of the importance and contribution of heritage buildings - including traditional masjids and its significance - emboldens the understanding of the past history and represents the preservation of cultural values and development of identity and of nationhood.



**Figure 10.29: The Moghul style of stained glass**



**Figure 10.30: Detail of the arabesque pattern on arcades at the masjid's verandah.**



**Masjid Mizan Putrajaya: Main Iwan Section D**

*(Source: Courtesy of Kumpulan Senireka Sdn Bhd)*